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FILE **VR/CS/RF**

SECRET 110203Z CITE SAIGON 1826

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PRIORITY DIRECTOR

1. SO FAR, OUR MISSION FRUSTRATINGLY UNPRODUCTIVE SINCE
HACH STONEWALLING, OBVIOUSLY UNDER ORDERS. UNLESS OR UNTIL I CAN
PERSUADE WESTMORELAND TO AMEND THOSE ORDERS, SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF
EVIDENCE OR SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE.

2. SINCE ROOT PROBLEMS, AS WE ALL RECOGNIZE, LIE MUCH MORE
IN POLITICAL PUBLIC RELATIONS REALM THAN IN SUBSTANTIVE DIFFERENCE,
I HAD HOPED TO GET SHARP, WESTMORELAND, KOMER AND BUNKER AGREEMENT
ON PRESENTATIONAL PACKAGING QUESTION BEFORE ADDRESSING EVIDENCE
AND SPECIFIC FIGURES. VARIETY OF CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER, TORPEDOED
THIS PLAN. IN BANGKOK ON 8 SEPTEMBER SHARP'S MORNING OBLIGATIONS
AT SENTO AND MY 1415 PLANE MADE 1327 - 1330 ONLY POSSIBLE TIME
FOR OUR MEETING. AS SHARP COMING UP EMBASSY STAIRS, HE GRABBED BY
HANNAN WHO, WHEN INFORMED SHARP GOING TO 1320 APPOINTMENT WITH
US WASHINGTON REPRESENTATIVE, STOOD STUFFILY ON HIS PREROGATIVES
AS SEN AND CLEFT SHARP INTO HIS OFFICE. THUS I MISSED SHARP,
WHICH I WAS ABLE TO GIVE GIST OF POSITION TO ADMIRAL

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READY. WHEN TEAM ARRIVED SAIGON 8 SEPTEMBER, WE LEARNED BOTH CESTMOREPAND AND KOWER HAD TAKEN OFF FOR WEEKEND OF LEAVE IN, RESPECTIVELY, MANILA AND BANGKOK. THUS WORKING SESSIONS HAD TO COMMENCE WITHOUT CONTROLLING POLICY QUESTIONS RESOLVED.

3. ON 9 SEPTEMBER, MACV J2 AND STAFF DEVOTED WHOLE DAY TO BRIEFING US ON REVISED MACV ESTIMATE, WHICH WIDENED RATHER THAN NARROWED OUR DIFFERENCES. MACV NOW STICKING ON 119,000 MAIN AND LOCAL FORCE FIGURE, 29,000 ADMIN SERVICES, 65,000 GUERRILLAS AND 85,000 POLITICAL CADRE FOR (BY NO COINCIDENCE) MILITARY AND POLITICAL ^R CB TOTAL OF 293,000. MACV ALSO ADAMANT THAT NO FIGURE OR QUANTIFIED ESTIMATE BE GIVEN FOR OTHER ELEMENTS VC ORGANIZATION SUCH AS SELF DEFENSE, SECRET SELF DEFENSE, ASSAULT YOUTH, ETC. (14.3 DRAFT FIGURES ARE 121,000 MAIN AND LOCAL FORCE, 43-60,000 RANGE ON ADMIN SERVICE, 60-100,000 RANGE ON GUERRILLAS, 90,000 ON POLITICAL CADRE, AND 120,000 FOR OTHERS.)

4. 10 SEPTEMBER DEVOTED TO SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGY ON ADMIN SERVICE AND GUERRILLAS. WE DID NOT ARGUE 2,000 DROP IN MAIN AND LOCAL FORCE (WHICH PROBABLY DEFENSIBLE) OR 5,000 DROP IN POLITICAL CADRE WHICH, AT THE MOMENT, WAS SECONDARY ISSUE. I ATTEMPTED TO CLEAR ATMOSPHERE BY OPENING SESSION WITH

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STRONG PITCH FOR CAREFUL LOOK AT DATA CATEGORY BY CATEGORY, WITHOUT CONSIDERING ULTIMATE TOTAL UNTIL ANALYSIS EACH SEPARATE CATEGORY COMPLETED, AND BY OUTLINING HOW PRESENTATIONAL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS ISSUE COULD BE HANDLED IN FASHION BENEFICIAL TO MACV AND US GOVERNMENT CREDIBILITY WHEREVER WE COME OUT. I ALSO EXPLAINED, IN LOW KEY AND WITH ALL POSSIBLE TACT, THAT NATIONAL ESTIMATES WERE DCI ESTIMATES; THAT OTHER USIB MEMBERS COULD DISSENT, BUT NO ONE COULD TELL THE USIB CHAIRMAN WHAT HIS ESTIMATE HAD TO BE. MY REMARKS SEEMED WELL RECEIVED BUT HAD NO INFLUENCE ON THE BEHAVIOR OF GENERAL DAVIDSON OR HIS SUBORDINATES.

5. 14.3 CASE ON ADMIN SERVICE AND GUERRILLA FIGURES MOST ABLY PRESENTED BY MESSRS. ADAMS AND NYLAND. THOUGH TO DISCOMFITLE OF OUR HOSTS THIS CASE PATENTLY STRONGER THAN MACV'S, IT WAVED ASIDE BY GENERAL DAVIDSON. TWO EXAMPLES CONVEY THE PICTURE: ESTIMATE DRAFT FIGURES INCLUDE 17,000 ADMIN SERVICE AT DISTRICT LEVEL; MACV ONLY ACCEPTS 5,000. MR. ADAMS EXPLAINED HOW OUR DISTRICT LEVEL FIGURE DEVELOPED FROM ADMIN TO COMBAT TROOP RATIO EXTRAPOLATED FROM DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE COVERING 14 DISTRICTS. GENERAL DAVIDSON TORE INTO THIS, SAYING 14 DISTRICT BASE TOO SLIM FOR EXTRAPOLATION OF VALID NATIONWIDE FIGURE. SOON THEREAFTER,

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HOWEVER, OFFICER WHO PRESENTED MACV CASE ON THIS POINT HAD TO ADMIT (IN RESPONSE DAVIDSON'S OWN QUESTIONS) THAT MACV 3,000 FIGURE BASED ON ONLY THREE DISTRICTS AND, EVEN HERE, MACV HAD MADE DOWNWARD ADJUSTMENT IN WHAT DOCUMENTS ACTUALLY SAID. NO MATTER, DAVIDSON WOULD NOT BUDGE. WHEN CHALLENGING MACV'S ADAMANT REFUSAL TO QUANTITY ESTIMATE OF IRREGULARS (SELF DEFENSE, SECRET SELF DEFENSE), WE POINTED OUT 14.3 DRAFT FIGURES TAKEN UNCHANGED FROM JULY 1967 MACV STUDY ON IRREGULARS. AGAIN, NO MATTER, NO GIVE. EVEN DIA TEAM MOST IRRITATED. AFTER SESSION, MR. FOWLER CUMBERLED "WE DID NOT TRAVEL 8,000 MILES TO BE INSULTED."

6. VARIETY OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL INDICATORS -- MACV JUGGLING OF FIGURES HIS OWN ANALYSTS PRESENTED DURING AUGUST DISCUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON, MACV BEHAVIOR, AND TACIT OR OBLIQUE LUNCHTIME AND CORRIDOR ADMISSIONS BY MACV OFFICERS, INCLUDING DAVIDSON -- ALL POINT TO INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION THAT GENERAL WESTMORELAND (WITH Komer's ENCOURAGEMENT) HAS GIVEN INSTRUCTION TANTAMOUNT TO DIRECT ORDER THAT VC STRENGTH TOTAL WILL NOT EXCEED 300,000 CEILING. RATIONALE SEEMS TO BE THAT ANY HIGHER FIGURE WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENTLY OPTIMISTIC AND WOULD GENERATE UNACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF CRITICISM FROM THE PRESS. THIS ORDER OBVIOUSLY MAKES IT

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IMPOSSIBLE FOR MACV TO ENGAGE IN SERIOUS OR MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE OR OUR REAL SUBSTANTIVE DISAGREEMENTS, WHICH I STRONGLY SUSPECT ARE NEGLIGIBLE.

7. I HOPE TO SEE KOMER AND WESTMORELAND TOMORROW (11 SEPT) AND WILL ENDEAVOR TO LOOSEN THIS STRAITJACKET. UNLESS I CAN, WE ARE WASTING OUR TIME. TO SHOW, HOWEVER, THAT WE ARE WILLING TO GO EVEN BEYOND THE LAST MILE, MESSRS. [REDACTED] ARE GOING TO SIT DOWN WITH MACV'S WORKING LEVEL ANALYSTS AND REVIEW THE EVIDENCE ON ADMIN SERVICE, GUERRILLAS AND POLITICAL CADRE DOCUMENT BY DOCUMENT.

8. FOR COSMETIC REASONS, GIVEN THE SITUATION AND THE FACT THAT KOMER AND WESTMORELAND WILL NOT ARRIVE UNTIL 11 SEPTEMBER, IT WOULD BE A POLITICAL ERROR FOR US TO LEAVE ON 12 SEPTEMBER AS PLANNED. THUS WE WILL HAVE TO REMAIN AN ADDITIONAL DAY OR TWO FOR APPEARANCES SAKE IF NOTHING ELSE. IF I CAN BUDGE WESTMORELAND, THIS WHOLE MATTER CAN BE RESOLVED TO EVERYONE'S SATISFACTION IN A FEW HOURS OF SERIOUS DISCUSSION. IF I CAN NOT, NO AGREEMENT IS POSSIBLE.

9. [REDACTED] HAVE BOTH SEEN THIS MESSAGE. SABETAY LEFT AFTERNOON 10 SEPTEMBER.

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